

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AORG, FBO, CONS, IT

SUBJECT: CLOSING TRIESTE/OPENING VENICE

1. I AM INFORMED THAT THE DEPARTMENT IS CONSIDERING POSSIBILITY OF CLOSING A NUMBER OF CONSULAR POSTS AROUND THE WORLD AND THAT TRIESTE IS ONE OF THE LEADING CANDIDATES FOR CLOSURE.

2. IT IS CLEAR THAT THE BASIC RATIONALE FOR KEEPING TRIESTE OPEN HAS BEEN TO SOME DEGREE UNDERCUT BY THE RECENT CONCLUSION BY ITALY AND YUGOSLAVIA OF AN AGREEMENT DELINEATING THE FRONTIER IN THE TRIESTE AREA. THIS SHOULD PROVIDE INCREASED STABILITY IN THE AREA AND ELIMINATE THE MORE OR LESS POLITICAL/LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR A US PRESENCE THERE WHICH DERIVED FROM THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING OF 1954. I WOULD BE EXTREMELY CONCERNED HOWEVER IF TRIESTE WERE CLOSED AND THE ENTIRE NORTHEAST OF ITALY WAS LEFT WITHOUT ANY US REPRESENTATION.

3. IN MY VIEW, THE REQUIRED US PRESENCE COULD BEST BE PROVIDED BY REOPENING A CONSULATE IN VENICE. WE ALREADY SUFFER FROM THE FACT THAT VENICE AND THE VENETO ARE SOME DISTANCE FROM MILAN. THUS, THE CONSULAR SERVICE WE PROVIDE IS OF NECESSITY SOMEWHAT REDUCED BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF HAVING USG OFFICIALS RESIDENT IN THE AREA IS NIL. WITH ITS PORT AND LARGE INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX ON THE MAINLAND AT MESTRE, VENICE IS THE INDUSTRIAL HUB OF THIS POLITICALLY IMPORTANT AREA. VENICE IS ALSO ITS CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CENTER. WHEN THE CONSULATE IN VENICE WAS CLOSED 13 YEARS AGO (FOR REASONS THAT ARE STILL HARD TO
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UNDERSTAND), THE VENETO WAS A PREDOMINANTLY AGRICULTURAL AREA WITH A POLITICALLY CONSERVATIVE AND STABLE POPULATION; TODAY IT

IS URBAN AND INDUSTRIAL AND NO LONGER THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
"SAFE" DISTRICT. IT IS IN THE PROCESS OF ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND
CULTURAL CHANGE SIMILAR TO THAT THAT HAS ALREADY OCCURRED IN THE
AREAS AROUND TURIN AND MILAN. HOPEFULLY THE POLITICAL RESULTS
WILL BE BETTER, BUT THE SITUATION CLEARLY ARGUES FOR A MORE ACTIVE
AND VISIBLE US PRESENCE. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE ITALY IS IN
AN EXTREMELY DELICATE POLITICAL CONDITION. THE GOAL OF THE
AMERICAN MISSION IN ITALY IS DIFFICULT BUT IMPORTANT PARTICULARLY
IF OUR FRIENDS ARE TO MAINTAIN THEIR WILL FOR A PLURALISTIC
DEMOCRATIC STATE. REDUCTION OR ELIMINATION OF THE AMERICAN
PRESENCE IN LARGE AND SENSITIVE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY WOULD BE MOST
UNWISE IN TERMS OF OUR BASIC INTEREST IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

4. WHILE I BELIEVE THAT THE NEED FOR A US PRESENCE IN THE AREA
CAN BEST BE MET BY HAVING A CONSULATE IN VENICE, I FEEL STRONGLY
THAT WE SHOULD NOT CLOSE TRIESTE UNTIL WE ARE IN A POSITION TO
OPEN VENICE. TIMING IS OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE, AND I WOULD
INSIST THAT WE BE ABLE TO ANNOUNCE THE OPENING OF VENICE WHEN WE
REACH THE POINT OF ANNOUNCING THE CLOSING OF TRIESTE. INDEED, IT
WOULD BEST BE HANDLED, NOT AS THE CLOSING OF ONE AND SUBSEQUENT
OPENING OF ANOTHER, BUT RATHER AS A MOVE FROM ONE TO THE OTHER
SO AS BEST TO SERVE THE AREA AS A WHOLE, AS WELL AS TRIESTE IN
PARTICULAR. SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD DO MUCH TO MITIGATE THE
SERIOUS OUTCRY WE CAN EXPECT FROM THE GOOD CITIZENS OF TRIESTE
WHO HAVE HAD A US CONSULATE SINCE 1792. VOLPE

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